



SHARPE JAMES  
MAYOR  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY  
07102

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Mayor Sharpe James today called on officials of Public Service Electric and Gas to allow tenants to pay their own utility bills when landlords are delinquent by more than 30 days.

"This would avert situations such as those at the 38 building Amity Village complex, where PSE&G threatened to cut off gas and electricity for non-payment of bills amounting to over \$58,000, and tenants would be allowed to deduct their utility payments from their rent," maintained James.

After discussions with the utility company yesterday, the Mayor said that he and Senator Ronald L. Rice had received assurances that "gas and electricity would continue to be provided to all Amity Village buildings until a payment schedule can be worked out with tenants."

At the same time, he contended, "It is foolish to wait until bills accrue for more than \$50,000 and then expect tenants to be responsible for paying them.

"PSE&G needs to establish a policy whereby tenants are contacted within 30 days if their landlord has not paid utility bills," he said. "This way they may be able to pay the delinquent amount by pooling their resources."

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AMITY VILLAGE AD 1

James said he and Rice, who is also Newark's West Ward councilman, would meet with PSE&G officials and tenants early next week about setting up a fee schedule.

Meanwhile, the Mayor noted he has continued to keep open lines of communication between Newark and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in an effort to improve conditions at the Amity Village complexes.

"We are in direct contact with HUD, and we are willing to work with them in developing an innovative approach to repairing, maintaining and bringing these buildings up to code," said the Mayor.

However, he cautioned, "The federal government and city must come to an agreement on federal subsidies to housing to thwart any future situations such as we have encountered at Amity Village where owners fail to make repairs and tenants do not pay rent. Then landlords walk away from their deteriorated property and the tenants come to the city looking for help.

"Tenants must realize, there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The days of the free lunch in America are over, James maintained, stressing, "Time and time again I have implored tenants to pay their rents even if it means setting up an escrow account by an attorney to obtain court-ordered repairs of their buildings."